

to Miss Velda Tresham, Maybrook. Then he went to his rather cheerless room where he was making a struggle of life trying to write for the newspapers.

Maybrook was the little country town from which Earle had come six months previous. Velda Tresham was the one young lady in that village for whom he entertained a warmer sentiment than she had ever divined. Tolman, making a visit to the city, had come across Earle. Only casually had Earle ventured to ask about Velda. He had heard incidentally that Tolman had been paying some attentions to the young lady, and did not seek a gratuitous heartache by exploring the intimacy.

Earle knew that the erudite Professor Tresham, the father of Velda, was a great collector of unique oddities. He had sent the prayer mill to Velda hoping she might write to him. At least it would show that he had not forgotten her.

The next day Earle was sorry that he had sent the little gift. He happened to meet Tolman. The latter dropped into a jewelry store and produced an exquisite little ring.

"I wish you would engrave this for me," he said to the jeweler, and carelessly scribbled on a card: "Ward to Velda."

Earle chanced to glance at the inscription ordered. He said nothing about it, but his heart sank like lead. To him there was only one "Velda" in the world, and he parted with Tolman with

the impression that what he had just seen was an engagement ring, and Miss Velda Tresham its prospective recipient.

The conviction killed a good deal of the ambition of the young writer. He changed his room for a cheaper one. Things did not go very well with him. He did not seem to break in with any regular publisher. He struck the erratic routine of a penny-a-liner. Then, cheerless and disappointed, he broke down. A fit of sickness followed. He was two months in the hospital, and came out of it to face the world, a pensioner on the bounty of a fine-souled bohemian, almost as poor as himself, but glorying in dividing the last cent with a fellow journalist.

"Down and out," was the way that Earle put it to himself. If he had only received a word from Velda! She was probably married by this time, he reflected.

"Tell you, Barton," his friend and almoner said to him, "you're too good for this market. If you could get into the magazine circle now—once a foothold, and you're a made man."

But Earle shook his head mournfully. He said with a sad smile:

"I'd starve before my first story was paid for. No, I'll pound along on the occasional special article line. I can at least get a half living from that."

And then suddenly, by a rare chance, there awoke one day in the experience of this lonely city waif the most extravagant soul of hope. Magically, poverty was